

WORKING DRAFT

Whitefish Urban Corridor Study of US Highway 93
Technical Memorandum – Task 22

Screening Criteria, and Screening Results for Conceptual Corridor Options

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TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM - TASK 22

Screening Criteria and Screening Results for Conceptual Corridor Options

This Technical Memorandum describes the methods used to determine the selection of design and improvement options for the US 93 corridor through Whitefish and presents the results of initial screening efforts. The screening criteria discussed in this memo are based on the overall vision statement and goals for the corridor presented in the Technical Memorandum for Task 20. The screening process considered the conceptual design and improvement options and other strategies identified in the Technical Memorandum for Task 21. These options and strategies were discussed with the Citizen's Advisory Committee and public at meetings held during August 2008.

SCREENING METHODOLOGY AND CRITERIA

Screening is a term often used to describe the process for reviewing a range of conceptual design and improvement options or strategies ("alternatives" under the National Environmental Policy Act) and deciding which ones to carry forward for detailed study. The primary function of the screening process is to determine feasible actions to address the overall purpose and specific needs of a project. Screening provides a means of separating the **unreasonable** options (those which can be eliminated without detailed study) from the **reasonable** options (those carried forward for more detailed study).

The overall purpose of this evaluation process is to screen potential improvements and strategies to help identify the most reasonable actions for the US 93 corridor. Reasonable design and improvement options will be subjected to a more detailed analysis to finalize the recommended system improvements for the corridor.

The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) do not define the term "reasonable" alternative. However, based on the CEQ's guidance (Question 2a in its *Forty Most Asked Questions Concerning CEQ's National Environmental Policy Act Regulations*) suggests "reasonable alternatives include those that are practical or feasible from the technical and economic standpoint and using common sense, rather than simply desirable from the standpoint of the applicant." This general guidance will be considered in the identification reasonable design options for the corridor.

The evaluation of design and improvement options will be performed using a multi-step process designed to consider how well the potential improvement strategies address the following goals for the corridor:

1. Preserve the role of US 93 as regional transportation route while ensuring its future performance and level of service as an urban principal arterial.
2. Design improvements that provide a safe roadway and transportation environment for all facility users and those abutting the roadway.
3. Ensure improvements are consistent with current MDT geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials wherever practicable.

4. Provide transportation improvements in the corridor that are compatible with local land use and transportation plans and that are sensitive to aspects of the community valued by Whitefish's residents.
5. Provide transportation solutions that minimize impacts to the natural, cultural and social environment in the corridor where practicable.
6. Ensure corridor improvements are feasible to implement and represent a reasonable expenditure of limited public funds.

These goals support the vision statement established for the Whitefish Urban Corridor as discussed in the Technical Memorandum for Task 20 of the Corridor Study. The goals also reflect the purpose and need for improving the highway corridor as presented in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS/ROD. The original FEIS purpose and need statement still remains valid because the same fundamental needs identified in the document still exist within the Whitefish Urban corridor.

Pre-Screening Corridor Design Options and Strategies

As a first step in identifying potentially actions for the corridor, a wide range of conceptual design and improvement options and strategies will be pre-screened to help avoid consideration of improvements or actions that fail to support the overall goals for the US 93 corridor or that possess "fatal flaws." Fatally flawed design options or transportation strategies are those that common sense suggests are unrealistic or that have little or no reasonable chance of being implemented.

Pre-screening will be based on a qualitative assessment of whether an option or strategy has the ability to meet the corridor purpose and need and whether any fatal flaws appear likely. A simple "yes/no" response will typically be used at this stage to assess how well each option or strategy meets stated project goals. The reasons why design options or other strategies were dropped at this stage will be noted.

Detailed Screening of Corridor Design Options and Strategies

Improvement options and/or other transportation strategies advanced from the Pre-screening stage will then be subjected to more detailed screening to help identify those that should be evaluated in further in the corridor study. Detailed screening is a comparative two-step process intended to identify those options that best address the goals for the corridor.

First-Level Screening. This initial screening level involves a qualitative assessment of corridor options to identify those options or strategies that are most practical or feasible from a technical, economic, and environmental standpoint. The initial screening step is designed to reduce the number of options through the general consideration of their ability to meet goals and associated objectives for the corridor. The options will be evaluated using a comprehensive set of screening criteria developed in response to identified goals and objectives. Each design and improvement option will be evaluated relative to each of the other option to eliminate those that: would not provide desired operational characteristics; could potentially cause unreasonable impacts to the environment; do not conform with local land use plans or notable community desires; or are financially unrealistically due to high implementation costs.

Wherever possible, a "yes" or "no" assessment will be made for each screening criterion. The initial

screening will also consider other key information like the overall operational and safety performance of the option, associated environmental effects, and order of magnitude costs (low, medium, and high cost) or in the corridor. Traffic modeling for existing (2003) and future year (2030) conditions with and without the option provided the information needed to assess the operational characteristics and overall performance of each design option. The operational evaluation will focus on key measures of effectiveness generated as outputs from the use of *Synchro* software.

Preliminary options will be ranked based on their ability to meet corridor goals and objectives and a determination will be made as to which options are reasonable to advance to the second-level screening. The results of the first-level screening will be communicated to the public to document all alternatives that were considered and the rationale for selecting alternatives for final analysis.

Second-Level Screening. The remaining design and improvement options will then be evaluated and compared with each other through a second and more detailed level of screening to help identify the option(s) that best address corridor needs. Wherever possible, the final screening process will focus on quantifiable measures to help differentiate between each option.

Criteria Used for the Detailed Screening Process

Screening criteria based on the goals and objectives for the corridor were developed for the two screening levels, as appropriate for the progressive nature of the process. **Table 1** lists the criteria employed in each stage of the detailed screening process. Generally, the same criteria will be used at each level, but the performance measures by which each criterion is judged is elaborated in more detail at each subsequent level and as fewer options are considered.

Table 1: Whitefish Urban Corridor Detailed Screening Criteria

CAPACITY CONSIDERATIONS			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Preserve the role of US 93 as regional transportation route while ensuring its future performance and level of service as an urban principal arterial.</i>	Provide adequate connectivity to the regional and local transportation network.	Is the option continuous over the study length?	Trip length and travel time. Provides new and desirable connections to local street network.
	Provide adequate capacity and an acceptable Level of Service (LOS C or higher) in the year 2030 or beyond.	V/C, LOS, average travel time and delay	V/C, LOS, average travel time and delay. Changes in traffic volumes, VMT, and vehicle hours of travel.
	Minimize congestion and delays for vehicles at intersections.	Does the option have potential to reduce congestion and delay for facility users?	V/C ratios, LOS, and travel time and delay. Changes in traffic volumes, VMT, and vehicle hours of travel.
	Provide a design that manages truck traffic through the community in a safe and efficient manner and accommodates large vehicle movements at key intersections.	Would the option change the manner in which trucks are accommodated on US 93?	Would the option improve traffic flows for trucks through the City? Would key intersections be designed to better accommodate truck traffic and turning movements?
	Reduce the number of driveway access points existing along the corridor where possible.	Could the option reduce the number of driveway intersections along corridor?	Number of driveway access points combined or eliminated in corridor.
	Accommodate multimodal transportation opportunities within the corridor.	Would the option potentially support increased multimodal transportation facilities?	Would the option potentially support increased multimodal transportation facilities?

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Design improvements that provide a safe roadway and transportation environment for all facility users and those abutting the roadway.</i>	Provide a design that addresses identified safety and design deficiencies.	Does the option meet MDT's geometric design criteria for urban principal arterials?	Does the option meet MDT's geometric design criteria for urban principal arterials?
	Provide a design that addresses identified high crash locations in the corridor.	Does the option address identified common factors identified in crash analysis?	Number of locations benefited
	Provide a design that reduces opportunities for traffic conflicts within the corridor.	Does the option have the potential to reduce traffic conflicts?	Number of locations benefited
	Provide a design that manages truck traffic through the community in a safe and efficient manner.	Would the option change the manner in which trucks are accommodated on US 93?	Would the option improve traffic flows for trucks and improve overall safety?
	Reduce the number of driveway access points existing along the corridor where possible.	Does the option have the potential to reduce the number of driveway access points along the corridor?	Number of driveway access points combined or eliminated in corridor
	Provide a design that presents a safe and accessible pedestrian environment for all users regardless of age or ability.	Does the option include improvements to enhance safety for pedestrians? Does the option include improvements to enhance mobility for pedestrians?	Does the option include improvements to enhance safety for pedestrians? Does the option include improvements to enhance mobility for pedestrians?
	Consider special design treatments at key pedestrian crossing locations in the corridor to help reduce crossing distances, enhance crosswalk visibility, and slow approaching vehicles.	Does the design include special treatments or elements that enhance pedestrian safety?	Does the design include special treatments or elements that enhance pedestrian safety?
	Provide roadway design treatments to accommodate bicyclists in a safe manner consistent with guidance from the City of Whitefish's Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan.	Does the design option include features that enhance safety for bicyclists? Would alternative be consistent with recommendations from the City of Whitefish's Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan?	Does the design option include features that enhance safety for bicyclists? Would alternative be consistent with recommendations from the City of Whitefish's Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan?
CONSISTENCY WITH APPLICABLE GEOMETRIC DESIGN CRITERIA			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Ensure improvements are consistent with current MDT geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials wherever practicable.</i>	Eliminate or reduce the number of existing non-standard features or other physical deficiencies associated with the facility.	Does the option meet MDT's geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials?	Does the option meet MDT's geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials?

COMPATIBILITY WITH LOCAL PLANS AND COMMUNITY IDEALS			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Provide transportation improvements in the corridor that are compatible with local land use and transportation plans and that are sensitive to aspects of the community valued by Whitefish's residents.</i>	Design transportation improvements within the corridor to consider the recommendations of the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.	Would the option be compatible with or support recommendations from Downtown Business District Master Plan?	Extent to which the option incorporates recommendations from Downtown Business District Master Plan
	Accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists in a manner consistent with the City of Whitefish's Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan.	Would the option be consistent with the City of Whitefish's Pedestrian and Bicycle Trails Master Plan?	Does the option provide desired trail connections or enhance trail components?
	Balance transportation improvements with the preservation of Whitefish's unique "character" and quality of life.	Would enhancements be consistent with features recommended in local plans or desired by the City of Whitefish and local residents?	Would enhancements be consistent with features recommended in local plans or desired by the City of Whitefish and local residents?
	Identify opportunities to enhance the continuity of the adjoining street network and improve local mobility.	Does the option provide new and desirable connections to local street network?	Degree to which the option makes new and desirable connections to the local street network
	Consider context sensitive solutions (CSS) to enhance the appearance of the corridor.	Does the option have the potential to enhance the appearance of the corridor?	Would enhancements be consistent with features recommended in local plans or desired by the City of Whitefish and local residents?
POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Provide transportation solutions that minimize impacts to the natural, cultural and social environment in the corridor where practicable.</i>	Minimize impact to Wildlife/Fisheries Habitat.	Would wildlife or fisheries habitat be affected?	Number of streams affected. Potential acres of habitat loss.
	Minimize impact to listed Threatened or Endangered Species and/or Habitat.	Would listed species or critical habitat be affected?	Number of species and potential habitat affected
	Minimize impact to Wetlands and Waters of the US.	Are wetlands or Waters of the US affected?	Estimated acres of wetlands impacted. Number of waters crossed. Estimated length of affected bank areas.
	Minimize impact to Floodplains.	Would FEMA-designated 100-year floodplains be crossed or encroached upon?	Estimated length of transverse or longitudinal floodplain encroachment
	Minimize impacts to Whitefish "critical areas."	Would City of Whitefish "critical areas" including storm water conveyances, streams, wetlands, lakes, or areas with steep slopes be affected?	Estimated acres of wetlands impacted. Affects areas with high groundwater, streams, lakes, or areas with steep slopes or geologic hazards.
	Minimize impact to prime and unique farmlands.	Is NRCS-classified prime and unique farmland affected?	Acres affected, requires conversion of farmland
	Ensure conformity with Air Quality standards.	Is there a potential to increase pollutant emissions?	Peak hour vehicle miles of travel/emissions
	Minimize potential Noise impacts to sensitive receptors.	Are noise sensitive receptors present?	Number of sensitive receptors
	Minimize encroachment on Hazardous Materials Sites.	Are Hazardous Materials Sites affected?	Number of sites and area impacted
	Minimize impact to Cultural Resources.	Are NRHP or NRHP-eligible resources affected?	Number of sites potentially impacted
	Minimize impact to Section 4(f)/6(f) Resources.	Are 4(f) or 6(f) Resources affected?	Number of sites potentially impacted

POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS (Continued)			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Provide transportation solutions that minimize impacts to the natural, cultural and social environment in the corridor where practicable.</i>	Minimize impacts to potential Environmental Justice communities.	Are potential EJ communities affected?	Number and type of population impacted by census block group
	Minimize socio-economic impacts.	Would the option likely cause notable socio-economic effects?	Number of businesses directly affected, Residential/business relocations
	Minimize Right-of-Way (ROW) impacts.	Would new ROW likely be required?	Acres of potential ROW impact; Number of potential displacements.
	Minimize the loss of access to properties.	Would the option eliminate access from adjoining properties?	Number of properties affected
	Minimize impacts to utilities.	Would utilities be affected?	Number of major utilities crossed. Severity of utility conflicts and relocations.
FEASIBILITY AND AFFORDABILITY			
GOAL	OBJECTIVES	First Level Screening Criteria	Second Level Screening Criteria
<i>Ensure corridor improvements are feasible to implement and, represent a reasonable expenditure of limited public funds.</i>	Ensure improvements are feasible to implement by MDT and FHWA.	Relative expense and ease of procedural requirements for MDT/FHWA to advance the option through a future NEPA process. Does a precedent exist for similar strategies? Is the option feasible to construct?	Would the option be less expensive or procedurally less difficult for MDT/FHWA to advance through a future NEPA process than other options? Does a precedent exist for similar strategies? Estimated Construction Cost.
	Ensure improvements can be constructed while maintaining traffic operations.	Could the option be constructed under traffic?	Could the option be constructed under traffic?
	Ensure relative construction and maintenance costs are in line with likely availability of funding.	Is the option potentially fundable by FHWA/MDT?	Estimated Construction Cost, Estimated Maintenance Costs, Would construction cost be reasonable as compared to other MDT projects?
	Ensure improvement strategy has a reasonable degree of public and political support.	Does the option include components or design features that would likely result in agency or public opposition or generate controversy?	Compatibility with local land use and transportation plans; Citizens Advisory Committee/Public response to alternative; Strategy would not face insurmountable opposition.

PRE-SCREENING RESULTS FOR CORRIDOR OPTIONS

A range of design and improvement options and other strategies to potentially address traffic congestion, future travel demands, and other needs on US 93 corridor through Whitefish was identified and described in the Task 21 Technical Memo. These options, listed in **Table 2**, include alternatives from the U.S. Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS/ROD, four design configurations developed after the completion of the FEIS/ROD, and other transportation strategies that may potentially help address travel demands in the corridor.

Table 2: Options Considered in the Pre-Screening Stage

Design and Improvement Options	Alternate Routes or Other Network Improvements	Other Strategies Warranting Initial Consideration
A (Four Lane) C (Couplet-1) C (Couplet-2) C (Couplet-3) - PREFERRED ALT. C (Couplet-4) C (Couplet-Offset) Modified ROD Configuration Contra-Flow Configuration Truck Route Configuration Downtown Business District Master Plan Configuration	<u>Western Route Alternates</u> FEIS Bypass Alternative A FEIS Bypass Alternative B FEIS Bypass Alternative C FEIS Bypass Alternative D Selected Off-system Improvements Indirectly Benefiting the Corridor	No-Build Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Transportation System Management (TSM) Improvements Transit Improvements (Bus Service) Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Strategies

These conceptual design improvement options and other strategies for the corridor were evaluated for fatal flaws and to determine their ability to support the purpose and need for improving US 93 through Whitefish. The following factors were considered to be potential fatal flaws for corridor design options or strategies:

- Potentially excessive project costs
- Not feasible for legal/logistical reasons (i.e., unlikely to be permitted)
- Reliance on unproven technology
- Clearly unacceptable effects on the natural environment
- Clearly unacceptable community impacts with potential for substantial local opposition

This pre-screening step also consisted of assessing each option or strategy with a subjective “Yes” or “No” response to the following questions based on six overall corridor needs:

- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy incorporate physical changes to the roadway and its adjoining environment so the road’s design complies with MDT’s geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials?*
- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide a transportation facility that meets current and future demands?*
- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy improve the operation and efficiency of the facility for the traveling public by incorporating measures to enhance traffic flows and better manage truck traffic in the corridor?*

- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy reduce opportunities for traffic conflicts and crashes associated with turning movements at major intersections and other corridor locations?*
- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide facility improvements that consider recommendations made in the City's Growth Policy and Downtown Business District Master Plan?*
- *Would the design and improvement option or strategy ensure future improvements help maintain the character of the community by being sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and land uses?*

Options and Strategies Eliminated through Pre-Screening

The detailed results of the pre-screening evaluations for corridor design options and strategies are presented in **Table 3**. As the table shows, all "Build Options" for the US 93 corridor and the "No Build Option" were recommended for first-level screening. The Build Options generally address many of the identified needs of the corridor although some options are more responsive than others. Without a detailed analysis of their potential ability to serve current and future travel demands in the corridor it is not possible to eliminate specific design options. This detailed analysis has been undertaken as part of the first-level screening process.

The following paragraphs discuss options and strategies dropped at the Pre-screening stage and the reasons for their elimination.

Western Route Alternates. None of the Western Route Alternates were advanced for detailed screening. The Whitefish Transportation Plan does not endorse the development of a western bypass route for US 93 based on the results of travel demand modeling, potential environmental impacts, public opposition, and for financial reasons. Comments received during the development of the Transportation Plan both supported and opposed the concept of a bypass route. Proponents of a bypass advocate it will reduce overall traffic volumes in the downtown, detour high truck traffic and make the business district more "community oriented." However, there is still notable local opposition to the idea of a bypass based on perceived adverse impacts to the low density "rural" neighborhoods on the southwest side of Whitefish and potential environmental effects to abundant wetlands and surface waters in this area.

Although a western bypass route would offer an alternative to the use of US 93 through Whitefish, the results of travel demand modeling clearly illustrated that a bypass would not solve the future traffic issues along US 93 corridor. Modeling results showed a bypass would draw traffic but would not significantly reduce traffic volumes on Spokane Avenue or 2nd Street through downtown Whitefish. Without such a reduction, it is difficult to justify the large expense and environmental consequences of developing an entirely new route around Whitefish. The Transportation Plan takes the position that the community is better served by strengthening the existing transportation grid system, providing additional east-west connectivity, and requiring roadway corridor development in vacant land if and when the land develops.

The Transportation Plan also very conservatively estimated the costs of a western bypass at between \$4 and \$9 million depending upon the selected route. These estimates did not include the associated costs of land for right-of-way which would be significant given the high land values in the Whitefish area. The costs of right-of-way acquisition along with those for design and environmental

compliance activities make a bypass financially unattainable in the short-term, particularly with the limited transportation funding available to MDT and local governments.

Selected Off-System Improvements. The Whitefish Transportation Plan examined the effects of making changes to the local road and street network to enhance travel and street connectivity within the Whitefish Study Area. Many of the improvements modeled for the Transportation Plan were associated with local roads (i.e. roads and streets not on the state's Urban System or under MDT's maintenance responsibility). However, these "off-system" roads and streets function as an important supporting road network to US 93.

Locally implemented improvements to off-system roads could potentially benefit traffic operations on US 93 by diverting traffic from the corridor or by offering alternate routes for travel within the community. **However, none of the off-system road improvement projects examined in the Transportation Plan offer the potential to address the anticipated travel demands and meet other needs on the US 93 corridor.**

Transportation System Management (TSM). Transportation System Management (TSM) projects are low cost, "tune-up" type improvements designed to increase the operational efficiency and capacity of the existing street system. These strategies often include actions like modernizing or installing new traffic signals, adding turn lanes at intersections, removing or restricting on-street parking, and lighting and signage improvements. The Whitefish Transportation Plan recommends three short-term, incremental improvements to the US 93 corridor or Baker Avenue:

- **TSM-4 (13th Street/US Highway 93 Intersection)** – Revise lane use designations and striping to smooth traffic flows on the east and west approaches to the intersection.
- **TSM-6 (Baker Avenue/13th Street Intersection)** - Install a traffic signal at the intersection of Baker Avenue and 13th Street when signal warrants are met.
- **TSM-7 (2nd Street Traffic Signal Modifications/Coordination)** – Add eastbound and westbound left-turn bays and designated left-turn phases to the traffic signals at the intersections of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue and 2nd Street and Spokane Avenue.

These projects (particularly TSM-7) could provide interim relief and help resolve traffic congestion and associated issues at spot locations on the US 93 corridor or associated roads. **However, by themselves, the TSM projects do not represent a long-term or comprehensive way to address all corridor needs.**

Travel Demand Management (TDM). TDM strategies are relatively low-cost ways of reducing travel demand and improving traffic flow during peak hours. These strategies consist of programs or policies focused on either reducing the number of vehicles on the roadway or redistributing trips so they occur during less congested periods of the day. Widely practiced TDM measures include telecommuting, variable work hours, walking or bicycling to work, employer-based carpool and vanpool programs, and parking management strategies.

The Whitefish Transportation Plan recognizes that some TDM measures could be effective in helping to reduce travel (vehicle trips and the vehicle miles traveled) as Whitefish grows. **While the**

use of TDM strategies in Whitefish is encouraged, this strategy is likely to result in only a small reduction in vehicle travel in the community and would not significantly reduce vehicle travel in the Whitefish Urban corridor.

Transit Improvements. Transit options are strategies that rely upon the provision of new transit services or the expansion of existing transit services to help reduce traffic congestion. Options like light rail transit, commuter rail transit, dedicated bus ways, elevated transit systems, and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes are not appropriate for the Whitefish Urban corridor. These options have a “regional” focus and have not been proposed as ways to address future travel demands in the greater Flathead Valley.

Improving bus transit within the community is a strategy that could help address traffic congestion and future travel demands on US 93. Currently, several organizations offer limited transit services within Whitefish (like the Snow Bus to Whitefish Mountain Resort and Eagle Transit’s shuttle services to other Flathead Valley communities). However, these services are currently offered only on a seasonal basis within Whitefish.

Given the relatively limited public transportation services presently available in Whitefish and funding issues typically associated with establishing and operating such services, relying on transit services alone to reduce congestion on the US 93 corridor is unrealistic. **Transit options were not advanced because they would not meet future travel demands on US 93 and would require large public subsidies to provide necessary capital and operating costs.**

ITS Strategies. ITS strategies include a broad range of wireless and wire line communications-based information and electronics technologies. When integrated into the transportation system’s infrastructure and in vehicles themselves, these technologies can help reduce congestion and improve safety. Although ITS strategies could potentially benefit some traffic operations in the greater Whitefish area, they would be unlikely to produce any significant travel changes within the US 93 corridor. **For this reason, ITS strategies were not recommended for further screening.**

Table 3: Pre-Screening Evaluation of Potential Corridor Options and Strategies

CONSISTENCY WITH THE CORRIDOR PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT (from US Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS): <i>"The primary purpose and need for improvements to US 93 is to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values."</i>	NO BUILD Existing/2030	FEIS/ROD	Other Alternatives from US 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS				
		Preferred Alternative	Alternative A (4-Lane)	Alternative C (Offset)	Alternative C (Couplet-1)	Alternative C (Couplet 2)	Alternative C (Couplet 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy incorporate physical changes to the roadway and its adjoining environment so the road's design complies with MDT's geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials? 	NO/NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide a transportation facility that meets current and future demands? 	NO/NO	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy improve the operation and efficiency of the facility for the traveling public by incorporating measures to enhance traffic flows and better manage truck traffic in the corridor? 	NO/NO	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)	YES (Operations) NO (Trucks)	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy reduce opportunities for traffic conflicts and crashes associated with turning movements at major intersections and other corridor locations? 	NO/NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide facility improvements that consider recommendations made in the City's Growth Policy and Downtown Business District Master Plan? 	NO/NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy ensure future improvements help maintain the character of the community by being sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and land uses? 	NO/NO	YES (Bridge?)	NO	YES	YES	YES (Bridge?)	YES
POTENTIAL FATAL FLAWS? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potentially excessive project costs 2. Legal/logistical infeasibility 3. Reliance on unproven technology 4. Potentially unacceptable environmental effects 5. Potentially unacceptable community impacts or community opposition 	NO	NO	YES (4, 5)	NO	NO	NO	NO
ADVANCE TO DETAILED SCREENING?	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 3: Pre-Screening Evaluation of Potential Corridor Options and Strategies (Continued)

<u>CONSISTENCY WITH THE CORRIDOR PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT (from US Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS):</u> <i>"The primary purpose and need for improvements to US 93 is to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values."</i>	Options Identified After the FEIS/ROD			
	Modified Record of Decision Configuration	Contra-Flow Configuration	Truck Route Configuration	Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan Configuration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy incorporate physical changes to the roadway and its adjoining environment so the road's design complies with MDT's geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials? 	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide a transportation facility that meets current and future demands? 	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis	UNKNOWN without further analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy improve the operation and efficiency of the facility for the traveling public by incorporating measures to enhance traffic flows and better manage truck traffic in the corridor? 	YES (Operations) PARTIALLY (Trucks)	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy reduce opportunities for traffic conflicts and crashes associated with turning movements at major intersections and other corridor locations? 	YES	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide facility improvements that consider recommendations made in the City's Growth Policy and Downtown Business District Master Plan? 	NO	YES	YES	YES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Would the design and improvement option or strategy ensure future improvements help maintain the character of the community by being sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and land uses? 	YES (Bridge?)	YES (Bridge?)	YES (Bridge?)	YES (Bridge?)
POTENTIAL FATAL FLAWS? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potentially excessive project costs 2. Legal/logistical infeasibility 3. Reliance on unproven technology 4. Potentially unacceptable environmental effects 5. Potentially unacceptable community impacts or community opposition 	NO	NO	NO	NO
ADVANCE TO DETAILED SCREENING?	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 3: Pre-Screening Evaluation of Potential Corridor Options and Strategies (Continued)

<u>CONSISTENCY WITH THE CORRIDOR PURPOSE AND NEED STATEMENT (from US Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS):</u> <i>"The primary purpose and need for improvements to US 93 is to reduce congestion on the existing facility, provide for planned growth and development, improve safety, provide for improved intermodal facility connections and provide for enhanced scenic values."</i>	OTHER TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES FOR US 93 THROUGH WHITEFISH					
	Western Route Alternates	Selected Off-system Improvements Indirectly Benefiting the Corridor	Transit (Bus Service) Improvements Only	Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Strategies Only	Transportation System Management (TSM) Improvements Only	Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Strategies Only
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy incorporate physical changes to the roadway and its adjoining environment so the road's design complies with MDT's geometric design criteria for Urban Principal Arterials?</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide a transportation facility that meets current and future demands?</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy improve the operation and efficiency of the facility for the traveling public by incorporating measures to enhance traffic flows and better manage truck traffic in the corridor?</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy reduce opportunities for traffic conflicts and crashes associated with turning movements at major intersections and other corridor locations?</i>	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy provide facility improvements that consider recommendations made in the City's Growth Policy and Downtown Business District Master Plan?</i>	YES/NO	NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	YES/NO	NO
▪ <i>Would the design and improvement option or strategy ensure future improvements help maintain the character of the community by being sensitive to the surrounding natural environment and land uses?</i>	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
POTENTIAL FATAL FLAWS? <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 1. Potentially excessive project costs▪ 2. Legal/logistical infeasibility▪ 3. Reliance on unproven technology▪ 4. Potentially unacceptable environmental effects▪ 5. Potentially unacceptable community impacts or community opposition	YES (1, 4, 5)	NO	YES (1)	NO	NO	NO
ADVANCE TO DETAILED SCREENING?	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

DETAILED SCREENING OF CORRIDOR OPTIONS

Improvement options or strategies advanced from the Pre-screening stage were subjected to a more rigorous evaluation to help identify those that should be evaluated in detail in the corridor study. Detailed screening consists of a comparative two-step process intended to identify those options that best address the goals for the corridor. The criteria considered for the detailed screening steps were previously shown in **Table 1**.

The primary purpose of the detailed screening process is to identify and advance reasonable design and improvement options for the corridor. Whether an option is considered reasonable relates to how well it meets the overall purpose for improving the US 93 corridor and specific needs within the corridor. Reasonableness can also be based on other factors, including environmental impacts, engineering constraints, potential cost considerations, and community acceptance.

First Level Screening

The first-level screening criteria presented in **Table 1** relate to six major considerations with associated goals. These screening considerations are highlighted briefly below:

1. **Capacity and Traffic Operations:** This criteria area relates to operational characteristics and performance of design and improvement options for with the corridor. The criteria relate to how well each option addresses current and future travel demands based on the results of detailed modeling and performance analyses.
2. **Safety:** This area focuses on improvements to the corridor from a safety standpoint. Issues such as traffic conflicts, bike and pedestrian safety, and issues determined from crash analysis are covered in this criteria area.
3. **Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies:** Compliance to MDT's geometric design criteria is the focus of this consideration.
4. **Compatibility with Local Plans and Community Ideals:** This criteria area deals with issues associated with how well each alternative follows locally accepted plans and ideals within the Whitefish community.
5. **Environmental Effects:** Environmental impacts that each design option is expected to have on the community are the focus of this criteria area. Conformity to environmental standards is also addressed in these criteria.
6. **Feasibility and Affordability:** This area is concerned with issues like overall constructability and probable cost of the improvements, future compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), and the potential for agency or public opposition to aspects of the improvements.

A key element of the first-level screening involved the development of travel demand modeling for each design option based on current (2003) and future year (2030) conditions. The proposed design changes were added to the existing street network in Whitefish and modeled under 2003 conditions to provide an indication of how each design option might initially operate. In order to assess the

future operation of the design and improvement options, each design configuration under consideration was added to the “E+C Network” and modeled. The Whitefish Transportation Plan defines the E+C Network as the existing street network plus committed projects expected to be in place by the year 2030. MDT’s Whitefish-West project on US 93 west of the city is the only “committed” transportation improvement included on the E+C Network. No other local improvements to the transportation network were assumed to be in place by the year 2030. This approach allows the traffic-related effects (traffic volume increases or decreases on roadway segments on the network) of the improvement options to be readily identified when compared to the operation of the existing street network and the future E+C Network.

The results of the travel demand modeling for each design and improvement options were used as inputs for detailed operational review of road network performance using *Synchro* software. The *Synchro* software is capable of producing detailed reports with numerical values for the key measures of effectiveness listed below. The development of the travel demand model and the use of traffic simulation and analysis software to analyze the current and future road network in Whitefish were discussed in more detail in the Technical Memorandum for Task 19 of the corridor study.

MEASURE OF EFFECTIVENESS	DEFINITION
Total Delay	A measure in hours of the total vehicle delay within the network. Lower values suggest better network operations.
Total Number of Stops	A sum of the total number of stops by vehicles within the network. Lower values suggest better network operations.
Total Travel Time	A sum of the individual vehicle travel times in hours within the network. Lower values suggest better network operations.
Average Travel Speed	The average speed of a vehicle traveling on the street network considering the time vehicles must stop. Average travel speeds close to the signed speed limit would be desirable.
Distance Traveled	A sum of the individual vehicle distance traveled in miles within the network. Lower values for miles traveled suggest more efficient travel through the network and less out of direction travel.
Intersection LOS	A summary of intersection level of service within the network. The rating is based on the number of intersections operating at a LOS of “D” or lower.
Unserved Vehicles	The total number of vehicles in the network not served upon arrival by the first green phase of traffic signals. Unserved vehicles must wait for successive red or green phases. Lower values for unserved vehicles suggest more efficient network operations.
Fuel Consumed	The combined total amount of fuel consumed by all vehicles in the network. Lower values for fuel consumption suggest more efficient network operations.
CO Emissions	The combined total amount of CO emitted by all vehicles in the network. Lower values suggest more efficient network operations.
Performance Index	A measure of the overall performance of the network based on delays, stops, and queuing properties. The lower the Performance Index rating, the better the network operates.

Tables 4 and 5 present measure of effectiveness values as calculated by *Synchro* software for No Action conditions and each design option under consideration during current (2003) and future (2030) P.M. peak hours. The measure of effectiveness values in the tables allow the performance of each design configuration to be assessed relative to the No Action option and to the ROD Preferred Alternative from the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Please note that the “% **Change**” columns for each design configuration in the tables show the percentage of change (+ or -) for individual measures of effectiveness based on a comparison to No Action conditions.

SCREENING ASSESSMENTS OF DESIGN OPTIONS

Individual screening assessments for the No Action condition and ten design configurations for the US 93 corridor are presented on the pages after Tables 4 and 5. These assessments address the six major considerations that relate to the overall goals for the corridor. Each assessment is concluded with a recommendation for whether the design option should be advanced to the final screening stage.

Table 4: Summary of Network Wide Measures of Effectiveness Under Existing (2003) Conditions

Measures of Effectiveness for FEIS/ROD Configurations

Measure of Effectiveness	No Action Value	Record of Decision Preferred		Alternative A (4-Lane)		Alternative C (Offset)		Alternative C (Couplet 1)		Alternative C (Couplet 2)		Alternative C (Couplet 4)	
		Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change
Number of Intersections	19	20	5%	19	0%	19	0%	19	0%	20	5%	19	0%
Total Delay / Vehicle (sec/veh)	11	7	-36%	7	-36%	8	-27%	8	-27%	7	-36%	8	-27%
Total Delay (hr)	78	52	-33%	51	-35%	49	-37%	55	-29%	53	-32%	59	-24%
Stops / Vehicle	0.34	0.29	-15%	0.28	-18%	0.31	-9%	0.27	-21%	0.27	-21%	0.33	-3%
Total Stops	8511	7642	-10%	7925	-7%	7142	-16%	6914	-19%	7189	-16%	8362	-2%
Average Speed (mph)	14	17	21%	18	29%	17	21%	17	21%	17	21%	16	14%
Total Travel Time (hr)	153	130	-15%	135	-12%	120	-22%	134	-12%	134	-12%	137	-10%
Distance Traveled (mi)	2220	2270	2%	2463	11%	2068	-7%	2231	0%	2284	3%	2249	1%
Fuel Consumed (gal)	190	170	-11%	177	-7%	155	-18%	164	-14%	166	-13%	178	-6%
CO Emissions (kg)	13.3	11.87	-11%	12.4	-7%	10.85	-18%	11.48	-14%	11.61	-13%	12.41	-7%
Unservd Vehicles (#)	79	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%
Performance Index	101	74	-27%	74	-28%	69	-32%	74	-27%	73	-28%	83	-19%
Intersections at or above a LOS "C"	8	17	113%	11	38%	14	75%	14	75%	17	113%	12	50%
Intersections at or below a LOS "D"	11	3	-73%	8	-27%	5	-55%	5	-55%	3	-73%	7	-36%

Measures of Effectiveness for Configurations Identified After the FEIS/ROD

Measure of Effectiveness	No Action Value	Record of Decision Preferred		Configurations from WGM Preliminary Traffic Report						Downtown Master Plan	
		Value	% Change	Modified Record of Decision		Contra-Flow		Truck Route		Value	% Change
Number of Intersections	19	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%
Total Delay / Vehicle (sec/veh)	11	7	-36%	6	-45%	7	-36%	7	-36%	7	-36%
Total Delay (hr)	78	52	-33%	46	-41%	47	-40%	54	-31%	52	-33%
Stops / Vehicle	0.34	0.29	-15%	0.28	-18%	0.29	-15%	0.3	-12%	0.3	-12%
Total Stops	8511	7642	-10%	7539	-11%	7452	-12%	8332	-2%	8179	-4%
Average Speed (mph)	14	17	21%	18	29%	18	29%	18	29%	18	29%
Total Travel Time (hr)	153	130	-15%	124	-19%	121	-21%	134	-12%	131	-14%
Distance Traveled (mi)	2220	2270	2%	2270	2%	2189	-1%	2347	6%	2305	4%
Fuel Consumed (gal)	190	170	-11%	165	-13%	162	-15%	179	-6%	174	-8%
CO Emissions (kg)	13.3	11.87	-11%	11.53	-13%	11.34	-15%	12.49	-6%	12.17	-8%
Unservd Vehicles (#)	79	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%	0	-100%
Performance Index	101	74	-27%	67	-34%	68	-33%	77	-24%	75	-26%
Intersections at or above a LOS "C"	8	17	113%	17	113%	15	88%	15	88%	16	100%
Intersections at or below a LOS "D"	11	3	-73%	3	-73%	5	-55%	5	-55%	4	-64%

Table 5: Summary of Network Wide Measures of Effectiveness Under Future (2030) Conditions

Measures of Effectiveness for FEIS/ROD Configurations

Measure of Effectiveness	No Action	Record of Decision		Alternative A (4-Lane)		Alternative C (Offset)		Alternative C (Couplet 1)		Alternative C (Couplet 2)		Alternative C (Couplet 4)	
	Value	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change	Value	% Change
Number of Intersections	19	20	5%	19	0%	19	0%	19	0%	20	5%	19	0%
Total Delay / Vehicle (sec/veh)	324	85	-74%	403	24%	214	-34%	356	10%	36	-89%	197	-39%
Total Delay (hr)	3242	997	-69%	5151	59%	2425	-25%	4098	26%	400	-88%	1823	-44%
Stops / Vehicle	0.56	0.4	-29%	0.46	-18%	0.47	-16%	0.35	-38%	0.37	-34%	0.41	-27%
Total Stops	20310	17012	-16%	21205	4%	19168	-6%	14487	-29%	15040	-26%	13665	-33%
Average Speed (mph)	1	3	200%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	7	600%	2	100%
Total Travel Time (hr)	3351	1121	-67%	5289	58%	2551	-24%	4229	26%	522	-84%	1926	-43%
Distance Traveled (mi)	3205	3663	14%	4093	28%	3668	14%	2685	-16%	3476	8%	2954	-8%
Fuel Consumed (gal)	2618	971	-63%	4057	55%	2030	-22%	3223	23%	506	-81%	1527	-42%
CO Emissions (kg)	183.02	67.91	-63%	283.55	55%	141.91	-22%	225.32	23%	35.36	-81%	106.73	-42%
Unserviced Vehicles (#)	574	978	70%	475	-17%	340	-41%	877	53%	844	47%	109	-81%
Performance Index	3299	1044.3	-68%	5209.5	58%	199	-94%	4139	25%	442	-87%	1860.7	-44%
Intersections at or above a LOS "C"	3	4	33%	6	100%	4	33%	4	33%	5	67%	9	200%
Intersections at or below a LOS "D"	16	16	0%	13	-19%	15	-6%	15	-6%	15	-6%	10	-38%

Measures of Effectiveness for Configurations Identified After the FEIS/ROD

Measure of Effectiveness	No Action	Decision Preferred		Configurations from WGM Preliminary Traffic Report						Downtown Master Plan	
	Value	Value	% Change	Modified Record		Contra-Flow		Truck Route		Value	% Change
Number of Intersections	19	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%	20	5%
Total Delay / Vehicle (sec/veh)	324	85	-74%	84	-74%	28	-91%	84	-74%	214	-34%
Total Delay (hr)	3242	997	-69%	984	-70%	328	-90%	989	-69%	2507	-23%
Stops / Vehicle	0.56	0.4	-29%	0.4	-29%	0.42	-25%	0.41	-27%	0.42	-25%
Total Stops	20310	17012	-16%	17097	-16%	17306	-15%	17603	-13%	17819	-12%
Average Speed (mph)	1	3	200%	3	200%	8	700%	3	200%	1	0%
Total Travel Time (hr)	3351	1121	-67%	1108	-67%	448	-87%	1114	-67%	2631	-21%
Distance Traveled (mi)	3205	3663	14%	3663	14%	3595	12%	3673	15%	3653	14%
Fuel Consumed (gal)	2618	971	-63%	962	-63%	478	-82%	969	-63%	2080	-21%
CO Emissions (kg)	183.02	67.91	-63%	67.27	-63%	33.42	-82%	67.7	-63%	145.39	-21%
Unserviced Vehicles (#)	574	978	70%	963	68%	358	-38%	1214	111%	602	5%
Performance Index	3299	1044.3	-68%	1031.2	-69%	376	-89%	1038	-69%	2557	-22%
Intersections at or above a LOS "C"	3	4	33%	5	67%	6	100%	4	33%	7	133%
Intersections at or below a LOS "D"	16	16	0%	15	-6%	14	-13%	16	0%	13	-19%

No Action Configuration



No Action represents the two-lane roadway system currently in place along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street. This option provides baseline conditions which were used to compare other corridor design and improvement options. The No Action configuration is represented by two conditions: existing and future.

The existing No Action condition mirrors the current lane and signal configurations on US 93 through Whitefish. The signal timing for each signal within the network was determined from existing signal timing data obtained from the MDT.

The future No Action condition assumes the existing system plus committed projects expected to be in place by the year 2030. The only committed improvement assumed to be in place by 2030 is MDT's Whitefish-West project. The Whitefish-West project extends from RP 127.8 (located on 2nd Street between Baker and Lupfer Avenues) to RP 133.0 west of Whitefish. The project is currently in the design phase. **No other local improvements to the transportation network were assumed to be in place by the year 2030.**

Screening Assessment - No Action

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This configuration assumes that no changes are made to the corridor and thus there would be no increase in capacity or changes in truck accommodation. This option would not provide any resolution of existing traffic problems on the US 93 corridor and would allow traffic conditions to worsen in the future. This is the poorest performing alternative under existing (2003) conditions and only performs better than Alternative A (4-Lane) and Alternative C (Couplet 1) configurations under future (2030) conditions.</p> <p>It is expected that this configuration could perform at a higher level under both existing and future conditions with minor intersection improvements along 2nd Street and signal upgrades. Adding dedicated turn-lanes and protected turn-phasing at key locations like the intersection of 2nd Street and Baker Avenue could substantially improve the performance level while still having a minimal impact on this portion of the corridor.</p>
Safety	<p>The No Action option would likely have the greatest crash potential due to the high level of congestion associated with projected traffic volume increases on the roadway. Side street entries and crossings of US 93 would be extremely difficult due to a lack of gaps in the traffic</p>

	on US 93. On-street parking movements, pedestrian crossings, bicycle traffic and access to businesses and residences along the corridor would continue to be inhibited due to increased traffic volumes.
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	This option would do nothing to resolve deficient geometric conditions within the corridor. The existing configuration does not accommodate large trucks making southbound right turns from Baker onto 2nd, large trucks making westbound right turns from 2nd to Baker, or large trucks making northbound right turns from Spokane onto 2nd Street.
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	The two-lane configuration on 2nd Street is consistent with recommendations for 2nd Avenue outlined in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. However, this option would not provide any of the other design improvements for Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, or Baker Avenue recommended in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.
Environmental Effects	This configuration would result in few new environmental effects within the corridor. No new right-of-way would be necessary and there would be no direct effects to adjoining land uses. This option would not require work within or near the Whitefish River or associated wetlands. Some minor increases in noise levels could be expected as traffic volumes grow within the corridor. As traffic conditions worsen on US 93, pedestrian crossings and bicycle use of the roadway would become more difficult.
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option would not require any major expenditures by MDT other than for continued maintenance of US 93 and associated facilities.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This option would not require further review under NEPA/MEPA. Newly proposed projects or maintenance actions for the corridor would need to demonstrate environmental compliance. Compliance with NEPA and MEPA (and other applicable federal, state and local regulations) would typically be demonstrated through the completion of Categorical Exclusions, Environmental Assessments and Section 4(f) Evaluations.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. There is a public expectation that improvements to the corridor should be implemented. Choosing to take no action to improve the US 93 corridor would be counter to local desires (and expectations) to implement improvements in downtown Whitefish.</p>

Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Alternative A (4-Lane Configuration)



Alternative A (4-Lane) was developed in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. This design option calls for two travel lanes in each direction along Spokane Avenue and along 2nd Street between Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue. Baker Avenue would be unchanged and there would be no work done to provide an east-west connection at 7th Street. Left-turns would be prohibited at peak hours along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street. Key elements of this option are described below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two northbound (NB) lanes and two southbound (SB) lanes would be provided on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- North of 7th Street, Spokane Avenue would have two lanes in each direction with no on-street parking or bicycle lanes.
- Dual NB left-turn lanes would be provided at 2nd Street.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two westbound (WB) lanes and two eastbound (EB) lanes would be provided with no on-street parking along 2nd Street.
- Appropriate turn lanes and geometric improvements would be incorporated at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 13th Street)

- This section would be unchanged with this configuration.

Screening Assessment - Alternative A (4-Lane) Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would substantially increase the capacity of Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street through Whitefish; however, truck accommodation would remain the same with all US 93 travel occurring on Spokane and 2nd Street. LOS analysis at the signalized intersections shows an improvement under this configuration due to the provision of dedicated turn lanes. Under existing (2003) conditions, this configuration performs favorably to the No Action alternative. Travel times are decreased, delay is decreased, and intersection LOS increases when analyzed under existing conditions.</p> <p>However, when analyzed under future (2030) conditions, this option shows an increase in total delay, total stops, total travel time, and a decrease in overall performance from that of the No Action option. The poor performance of this alternative can be largely due to the difficulty side-street traffic would have entering the corridor. The increase in the number of lanes makes the through or left-turn movements from the side-streets much more difficult due to the decrease in acceptable gaps. The potential for delay exists with the undivided 4-lane roadway section whenever through vehicles approach a vehicle waiting to make a left turn from the inside lane.</p>
Safety	<p>The 4-lane option relies on the use of an undivided roadway with 11-foot-wide travel lanes to limit the need for new right-of-way. The U.S. Highway 93 Somers-Whitefish FEIS suggested that left turn prohibitions may be required with this option during peak hours. The FEIS also indicated there would be no provision for bicycle traffic other than in the vehicle lanes along the edge of the roadway.</p> <p>The lack of left turn provisions with this option increases the potential for rear-end conflicts between left turning and through vehicles. Access to and from adjoining businesses along Spokane Avenue would become more difficult with the addition of through lanes, lack of left turn provisions, and absence of shoulders along the roadway—particularly during peak travel hours.</p> <p>The addition of new travel lanes associated with this option increases the crossing distances for pedestrians on Spokane and 2nd Street. This condition, plus the expected congested conditions on Spokane Avenue, would reduce safety for pedestrians at crossings. This may be a concern at 4th Street where a marked crosswalk exists along a pedestrian route serving schools several blocks east of Spokane Avenue.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design standards for urban principal arterials.</p> <p>From a review of the FEIS, it does not appear that the 4-lane</p>

	configuration considered in the document includes an outside shoulder along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street. MDT's <i>Geometric Design Criteria for Urban Principal Arterials</i> indicates that an 8-foot-wide outside shoulder is preferred on all multi-lane facilities. Due to constraints, shoulder widths may need further evaluation for possible design exceptions.
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>The provision of a 4-lane roadway on Spokane Avenue north of 7th Street and on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues would conflict with the design configuration for these streets identified in the Downtown Business District Master Plan (which has been adopted as part of the Whitefish City County Growth Policy).</p> <p>Adding more traffic lanes would notably change the character of the corridor—particularly along Spokane Avenue between 6th and 2nd where the street passes through a “traditional” neighborhood. Further, a 4-lane roadway is not consistent with the local desire to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment in downtown Whitefish as described in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.</p> <p>The lack of bike lanes on US 93 would require bicyclists to use a portion of vehicle lanes or the edge of the roadway for travel through the corridor. This would be inconsistent with the desired intent of the Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan to accommodate bicyclists on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street in a safe manner.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River and associated wetlands at the Spokane Avenue crossing due to the need to expand the width of roadway and to replace the existing culverts with a new bridge. Contaminated sediments are also known to exist along the Whitefish River at the highway crossing. Construction would occur in and adjacent to the Whitefish River.</p> <p>The right-of-way impacts associated with this configuration would be limited since the option relies on the provision of an undivided 4-lane road with 11-foot-wide travel lanes and no shoulders. Curb lines along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street would likely need to be moved to accommodate the roadway and any auxiliary turn lanes at intersections within the corridor. Right-of-way would be needed at the intersections of Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue to accommodate large truck movements or to add eastbound or westbound left turn lanes.</p> <p>The option would eliminate all parking on Spokane Avenue south of 2nd Street and along 2nd between Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes constructing a new bridge for the Whitefish River to replace the existing culverts on Spokane Avenue. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations. This option would focus all reconstruction work within existing rights-of-way on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street. This option

	<p>would likely have the lowest overall cost of the options considered since work would be confined to the existing corridor.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was examined in detail in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and a revision to the ROD. Completing a Re-evaluation process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than preparing a Supplemental EIS for the Whitefish Urban project area.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. While this option could substantially increase the capacity of Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street through the City, reconstructing these streets as 4-lane facilities appears to have little (if any) local support.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Alternative C (Couplet 1) Configuration



Alternative C (Couplet 1) is a design concept included with the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. This option creates a one-way couplet with Spokane Avenue providing for the northbound traffic and Baker Avenue providing for the southbound traffic. The concept does not include a bridge across the Whitefish River at 7th Street to link Spokane and Baker Avenues. The option makes use of Baker Avenue between 2nd and 13th Streets and 13th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues.

At the time of the FEIS, Baker Avenue was not continuous to 13th Street and there was no connection between Baker and Spokane Avenues at 13th Street. A signalized intersection now exists at 13th Street and Spokane Avenue and the intersection of Baker and 13th is controlled by a 4-way stop. Key elements of this configuration are described below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- This section of Spokane Avenue would be a one-way roadway with two NB lanes.
- On-street parking would be accommodated and a bike lane would be added to the street.
- Replacement of the culverts at Whitefish River crossing with a bridge.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided at this location.
- On-street parking would be accommodated on the south side of 2nd Street.
- Appropriate turn lanes and geometric improvements would be incorporated at 2nd/Baker.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 13th Street)

- This section would consist of a one-way roadway with two SB lanes.
- A signalized intersection would be created at the intersection with 13th Street.

13th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- One-way traffic would be accommodated via two EB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Alternative C (Couplet 1) Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would allow for a slight increase in the capacity along Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish due to the one-way couplet. Truck accommodation would change in that truck traffic would be split and required to use Spokane Avenue for north and west bound travel and Baker Avenues and 13th Street for southbound travel.</p> <p>Under existing (2003) conditions, the overall performance of this configuration is better than the No Action condition. Travel times are decreased, delay is decreased, and intersection performance increases when analyzed under existing conditions.</p> <p>However, when this configuration is analyzed under future (2030) conditions, it results in an increase in total delay and total travel time along with a decrease in the overall performance from that of the No Action condition. The poor future performance of this design option can be largely attributed to the lack of east-west connectivity along the corridor. Sufficient east-west connectivity is an important component to achieving optimal performance of a one-way couplet.</p> <p>One of the inherent disadvantages with one-way streets is that they force additional turning movements at the intersections caused by motorists who must travel “out-of-direction” to reach their destination. These additional turning movements increase the chance of a vehicular-pedestrian conflict at any given intersection, and also result in a system-wide increase in miles traveled over a comparable two-way system due to the amount of re-circulating traffic.</p> <p>This one-way traffic configuration would result in the most out-of-direction travel time and distance of the options considered – particularly for residents living west of Baker served by intersecting streets south of the Whitefish River crossing. Traffic increases on 5th Street would be expected as this street offers the first opportunity north of 13th Street to access Baker Avenue.</p>
Safety	<p>The 2-lane configurations of Baker and Spokane Avenues would keep pedestrian crossing distances similar to existing conditions. The crossing distance for pedestrians on 2nd Street would be increased over existing conditions with the addition of another through lane.</p> <p>This option (like others relying on one-way traffic flows) could increase the chance of a vehicular-pedestrian conflict at any given intersection along Spokane and Baker Avenues due to additional turning movements associated with out-of-direction travel. The U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS noted that one-way couplet configurations have the potential for increases in vehicle travel speeds on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p>

Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally complies with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to provide adequate shoulders for parking or use as a bicycle lane. Typically, 10 feet of width is needed to accommodate parking and 6 feet of width is needed for the provision of a bicycle lane. MDT's <i>Road Design Manual</i> calls for 4 foot-wide outside shoulders on urban minor arterial roadways without curbs.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This configuration varies notably from the design recommended in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan. The most notable variations include: 1) using a one-way couplet configuration over the full length of Spokane and Baker Avenues between 13th and 2nd Streets; 2) providing 3-lane roadway on 2nd Street instead of 2-lanes; and 3) the lack of a bridge at 7th Street linking Spokane and Baker Avenues. The business community does not appear to support the idea of one-way streets in downtown Whitefish.</p> <p>The option would not preclude development of the Whitefish Promenade along Spokane Avenue advocated in the Downtown Business District Master Plan. The minimal right-of-way needs along Spokane Avenue would help maintain local character by preserving existing boulevards and street trees.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at two locations. The river would be impacted at the Spokane Avenue crossing due to the need to expand the width of roadway and replace the existing culverts with a new bridge. Additionally, the existing Baker Avenue bridge over the Whitefish River would have to be replaced because the structure is too narrow to accommodate the proposed roadway cross-section. Wetland sites and contaminated sediments are also known to exist along the Whitefish River at these highway crossing.</p> <p>This configuration could generally be accommodated within existing rights-of-way. However, the 3-lane configuration on 2nd Street would likely cause the loss of some on-street parking between Spokane and Baker Avenues. The potential parking loss associated with this option would be similar to other Couplet configurations for the corridor.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and a new signal would be required at Baker and 13th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, Baker Avenue between 2nd and 13th Streets, and 13th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues. This option would be less costly to construct than options incorporating a new bridge at 7th Street.</p>

	<p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was examined in detail in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and a revision to the ROD. Completing a Re-evaluation process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than preparing a Supplemental EIS for the Whitefish Urban project area.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration relies on a one-way couplet to move traffic through downtown Whitefish. The one-way couplet configurations are not consistent with the traffic circulation concept presented in the Downtown Business District Master Plan. Some evidence exists that one-way circulation patterns are detrimental to downtown business vitality. The option also conflicts with the Downtown Business District Master Plan by relying on a 3-lane typical cross-section for 2nd Avenue. Maintaining a 2-lane roadway on 2nd Street is presented as an essential element of the Master Plan concept. The Master Plan has been adopted as part of the City's Growth Policy and as such, represents the "blueprint" for redevelopment in this part of Whitefish.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Alternative C (Couplet 2) Configuration



Alternative C (Couplet 2) is a design concept developed in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. This option creates a one-way couplet on Spokane and Baker Avenues between 13th and 2nd Streets. Spokane Avenue would provide for the northbound traffic and Baker Avenue would serve southbound traffic. This configuration is similar to Couplet 1 except that it includes a bridge across the Whitefish River at 7th Street and a connection to Kalispell Avenue along 7th. Key elements of this configuration are described below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- This section of Spokane Avenue would be a one-way roadway with two NB lanes.
- On-street parking would be accommodated and a bike lane would be added to the street.
- Replacement of culverts at the Whitefish River crossing with a new bridge.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided.
- On-street parking would be accommodated on the south side of 2nd Street.
- Appropriate turn lanes would be incorporated at 2nd/Baker.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 13th Street)

- This section would consist of a one-way roadway with two SB lanes.
- A signalized intersection would be created at the intersection with 13th Street.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A bridge across the Whitefish River would be provided to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two-way traffic (one EB and one WB lane) would be accommodated on 7th Street.
- Traffic signals would be installed at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- 7th Street would also be extended east to connect to Kalispell Avenue.

13th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- One-way traffic would be accommodated via two EB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Alternative C (Couplet 2) Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would allow for a slight increase in the capacity along Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish due to the one-way couplet. Truck accommodations would change from existing conditions and would be similar to Couplet 1.</p> <p>This configuration performs better than the No Action alternative under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are seen under this option. The 7th Street bridge helps add additional east-west connectivity necessary to enhance the performance of this one-way couplet configuration.</p> <p>Part of the increase in performance level of Couplet 2 as compared to the No Action condition can be attributed to the fact that there are no left-turns from the side streets that need to cross more than one lane of traffic. One-way traffic eliminates these movements that often result in traffic conflicts and increases in delay and travel time. Overall, this option could accommodate the additional traffic expected to occur in the future.</p> <p>This one-way configuration has the same inherent disadvantages as described for Couplet 1. However, the provision of a bridge with two-way traffic flows at 7th Street helps reduce out-of-direction travel time by providing a “cross-over” point midway between 2nd and 13th Streets.</p>
Safety	<p>Like Couplet 1, the 2-lane configurations of Baker and Spokane Avenues would keep pedestrian crossing distances similar to existing conditions but increase the crossing distance for pedestrians on 2nd Street.</p> <p>However, some safety concerns exist due to the potential for increases in vehicle travel speeds on Spokane and Baker Avenues and vehicular-pedestrian conflicts resulting from additional turning movements at intersections along the corridor associated with re-circulating traffic through the downtown or out-of-direction travel.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT’s design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to provide adequate shoulders.</p>

<p>Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals</p>	<p>Like Alternative C (Couplet1), this configuration varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan by incorporating a one-way couplet configuration over the full length of Spokane and Baker Avenues between 13th and 2nd Streets and by providing 3-lanes on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues instead of 2-lanes. This configuration provides a new bridge at 7th Street consistent with the concept shown in the Master Plan. However, Couplet 2 relies on only one eastbound and one westbound lane across the bridge and does not accommodate two-direction travel on Baker Avenue north of the new bridge.</p> <p>As mentioned previously, the use of one-way streets in downtown Whitefish does not appear to be favored by the local business community at this time primarily out of a desire to promote and enhance downtown vitality. Critics of one-way streets say motorists tend to drive faster on one-way streets and go past their destinations, then lose time and patience backtracking—all of which could translate to negative effects on the downtown businesses.</p> <p>Substantial sentiment exists within the community opposing a new bridge at this location due to its effects on the Whitefish River and associated wetlands and riparian habitat. The Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO) adopted by the City in early 2008 indicates the community places a high priority on protecting water bodies in the Whitefish area.</p> <p>The option would not preclude development of the Whitefish Promenade along Spokane Avenue advocated in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.</p>
<p>Environmental Effects</p>	<p>This configuration could generally be accommodated within existing rights-of-way. However, the 3-lane configuration on 2nd Street would likely cause the loss of some on-street parking between Spokane and Baker Avenues. The potential parking loss associated with this option would be similar to other Couplet configurations for the corridor.</p> <p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations. The river would be impacted at the Spokane Avenue crossing due to the need to expand the width of roadway or replace the existing culverts with a new bridge. Additionally, the existing Baker Avenue bridge over the Whitefish River would have to be replaced because the structure is too narrow to accommodate the proposed roadway cross-section. The new bridge at 7th Street linking Spokane and Baker Avenues would be provided at a location where the river channel and its associated riparian zone are substantially wider than most locations in the area. Consequently, this crossing will require a substantially longer bridge than at other highway crossings. Contaminated sediments exist along the Whitefish River at all three highway crossing locations.</p> <p>Since a roadway does not currently exist for 7th Street between</p>

	<p>Spokane and Kalispell Avenues, commercial right-of-way (including a business acquisition in the southeast quadrant of the new intersection) would be needed to construct this street extension.</p> <p>New right-of-way would be needed at the new 7th Street river crossing and the existing right-of-way may need to be supplemented at the Baker Street river crossing.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required along Spokane Avenue at 7th Street and on Baker Avenue at 7th and 13th Streets. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, Baker Avenue between 2nd and 13th Streets, 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues, and 13th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was examined in detail in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and a revision to the ROD. Completing a Re-evaluation process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than preparing a Supplemental EIS for the Whitefish Urban project area.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration relies on a one-way couplet to move traffic through downtown Whitefish. The one-way couplet configurations are not consistent with the traffic circulation concept presented in the Downtown Business District Master Plan. The option also conflicts with the Downtown Business District Master Plan by relying on a 3-lane typical cross-section for 2nd Avenue. Keeping a 2-lane roadway is presented as an essential element of the Master Plan concept. The Master Plan has been adopted as part of the City's Growth Policy and serves as a guide for downtown redevelopment in Whitefish.</p> <p>Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the Critical Areas Ordinance and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. It is believed new and reconstructed crossings can be designed and constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner and potential adverse effects can be adequately mitigated with respect to federal and state regulations. Some local opposition to a new bridge at 7th Street may be expected because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p>

Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Record of Decision Preferred Alternative (Couplet 3)



The U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS/ROD identifies this option as “Alternative C (Couplet 3)” and designates it as the Preferred Alternative for improvements to US 93 in the downtown area of Whitefish. This design and improvement option consists of a two-lane, one-way couplet along Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue north of 7th Street, with 2nd Street being a three-lane facility between Spokane and Baker Avenues. A new bridge across the Whitefish River would be provided at 7th Street to link Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue. Key elements of this option are provided below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking would be provided on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- Replacement of culverts at the Whitefish River crossing with a new bridge.
- A one-way roadway with two NB lanes would be provided between 7th and 2nd Streets.
- On-street parking would be allowed on both sides of the street with a bicycle lane being added to the right side of the street.

- Double northbound left-turn lanes with additional width provided for trucks would be included at 2nd Street.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided with on-street parking allowed on the southside of 2nd Street.
- EB left-turn lanes would be added at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Central Avenue.
- A WB left-turn lane would be provided at Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 7th Street)

- This section would consist of a one-way roadway with two SB lanes.
- On-street parking would be allowed on the west side with a bike lane on the east side of Baker Avenue.
- A southbound double left-turn lane would be added at the intersection with 7th Street.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A new bridge would be constructed to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two EB lanes and one WB lane would be provided with signals at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- Double EB right-turn lanes would be provided at the intersection with Spokane Avenue.
- WB right-turn lane would also be included at the intersection with Baker Avenue.
- A new connection would be made along 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues providing EB and WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - ROD/Preferred Alternative (Couplet 3)

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would allow for a slight increase in the capacity of Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish. Truck accommodations for northbound and westbound vehicles on US 93 would be unchanged except for the one-way lane configuration on Spokane Avenue. Southbound trucks would be required to travel south on Baker Avenue, and east along the 7th Street bridge before rejoining Spokane Avenue.</p> <p>This option performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are seen. The 7th Street bridge and 7th Street connection between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues notably improves east-west connectivity.</p> <p>Part of the increase in performance level of this option as compared to the No Action option can be attributed to the fact that there are no left-turns from the side streets that need to cross more than one lane of traffic. One-way traffic eliminates these movements that often result in increased delay and travel time. Overall, this configuration does an acceptable job of handling the additional traffic expected to occur in the future.</p> <p>Like Couplet 2, the provision of a bridge with two-way traffic flows at 7th Street would help reduce out-of-direction travel time by providing a “cross-over” point midway between 2nd and 13th Streets.</p>
Safety	<p>This option represents a notable increase in overall safety on US 93 when compared to existing conditions. Left turn conflicts for motorists on Spokane and Baker Avenues would be substantially reduced over current conditions due to the one-way traffic flows in these segments. However, there is a potential for decreased safety on Baker Avenue due to increased traffic volumes. The one-way configurations on Spokane and Baker Avenues also present some safety concerns due to the potential for increases in vehicle travel speeds. Vehicle-pedestrian conflicts could also increase due to additional turning movements at intersections along the corridor associated with out-of-direction travel and traffic using intersecting streets to re-circulate through the downtown.</p> <p>The 2-lane configurations of Baker and Spokane Avenues would keep pedestrian crossing distances similar to existing conditions. However, this option would increase the crossing distance for pedestrians at intersections along 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT’s design guidance for urban principal arterials.</p>

	<p>Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to provide adequate shoulders.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This configuration varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan by incorporating a one-way roadway on Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets and by providing 3-lanes on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues instead of 2-lanes. As indicated earlier, the business community does not appear to favor the one-way couplet concept for downtown Whitefish. The remainder of the configuration is generally consistent with the transportation concepts shown in the Master Plan.</p> <p>The bicycle and pedestrian facilities associated with this option represent improvements over existing conditions. The facilities and trail connections would be consistent with recommendations in the Whitefish Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. The option would not preclude development of the Whitefish Promenade along Spokane Avenue as advocated in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>Like Couplet 2, this option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations—at the Spokane Avenue crossing, at the existing Baker Avenue bridge, and at a new crossing location at 7th Street. As noted earlier, the new crossing at 7th Street would require a much longer bridge than at other highway crossing locations on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p> <p>WGM's Preliminary Traffic Report (February 2006) estimates the parking loss associated with this configuration at 106 spaces. This is comparable to the parking loss associated with other couplet options.</p> <p>New right-of-way (including a business acquisition) would be needed to accommodate the construction of 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues and the new 7th Street river crossing. Supplemental amounts of right-of-way may be needed at the river crossing on Baker Avenue.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required on Spokane and Baker Avenues at 7th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets, and 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was examined in detail in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS and ultimately chosen as the ROD/Preferred Alternative for the</p>

	<p>corridor in the ROD. Due to the time that has passed since the ROD was approved, advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and verification of the ROD. Completing such a process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than those associated with a Supplemental EIS.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration relies on a one-way couplet to move traffic through downtown Whitefish. The one-way couplet configurations are not consistent with the traffic circulation concept presented in the Downtown Business District Master Plan. The reasoning belief is that such circulation patterns are detrimental to downtown business vitality. The option also conflicts with the Downtown Business District Master Plan by relying on a 3-lane typical cross-section for 2nd Avenue. Keeping a 2-lane roadway is presented as an essential element of the Master Plan concept.</p> <p>Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the CAO and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. It is believed new and reconstructed crossings can be designed and constructed in an environmentally sensitive manner and potential adverse effects can be adequately mitigated with respect to federal and state regulations. Some local opposition to a new bridge at 7th Street may be voiced because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Alternative C (Couplet 4) Configuration



Alternative C (Couplet 4) is a design concept taken from the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. This option creates a one-way couplet on Spokane and Baker Avenues between 13th and 2nd Streets. Spokane Avenue would provide for the northbound traffic and Baker Avenue would serve southbound traffic. This configuration also enhances 5th Street to provide a more efficient connection between Baker and Spokane Avenues. Key elements of this configuration are described below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- This section of Spokane Avenue would be a one-way roadway with two NB lanes.
- On-street parking would be accommodated and a bike lane would be added to the east side of the street.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided.
- On-street parking would be accommodated on the south side of 2nd Street.
- Appropriate turn lanes would be incorporated at 2nd/Baker.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 13th Street)

- This section would consist of a one-way roadway with two SB lanes between 2nd and 5th Streets.
- A one-way roadway with two SB lanes would be provided between 2nd and 5th Streets.
- Two SB lanes and one NB lane would be provided between 5th and 8th Streets.
- Signalized intersections would be created at the intersections with 5th Street and 8th Street.
- A one-way roadway with two SB lanes would be provided between 8th and 13th Streets.
- A signalized intersection would be created at the intersection with 13th Street.

5th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- This section would be used as a major connection between Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue with one EB and one WB lane provided.

13th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- Two-way traffic would be accommodated via one EB and one WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Alternative C (Couplet 4) Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design option would allow for a slight increase in the capacity of Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish due to the one-way couplet. Truck accommodation would change in that they would be required to travel north on Spokane Avenue or south on Baker Avenue. Two-way accommodations for trucks and other traffic would be available at 5th and 13th Streets.</p> <p>This configuration performs better the No Action configurations under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are seen with this option.</p> <p>Like other couplet options, part of the increase in performance level as compared to the No Action conditions can be attributed to the fact that there are no left-turns from the side streets that need to cross more than one lane of traffic. Overall, this alternative does an acceptable job of handling the additional traffic expected to occur in the future.</p> <p>An improved 5th Street would help enhance east-west connectivity between Spokane and Baker Avenues. Incorporating a single northbound lane on Baker between 5th and 8th Streets would help limit out-of-direction travel particularly for residents of Baker Avenue neighborhoods south of the river served by 6th, 7th and 8th Streets.</p>
Safety	<p>As noted previously, the one-way configurations on Spokane and Baker Avenues present some safety concerns due to the potential for increases in vehicle travel speeds and vehicle-pedestrian conflicts at intersections along the corridor.</p> <p>Except at 5th Street, left turn conflicts for motorists on Spokane would be substantially reduced over current conditions due to the one-way traffic flow in this segment.</p> <p>The availability of a traffic signal and circulating traffic could notably increase traffic volumes and congestion on 5th Street.</p> <p>Changing lane configurations on Baker Avenue (2-lane one-way between 2nd and 5th Streets, 3-lane two-way between 5th and 8th Streets, and 2-lane one-way south of 8th Street) could be confusing to drivers.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue.</p>

	<p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This configuration varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan by incorporating a one-way couplet on Spokane and Baker Avenues between 2nd and 13th Streets, providing 3-lanes on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues instead of 2-lanes, and relying on an improved 5th Street as the primary “cross-over” link between Spokane and Baker one-ways. Additionally, this option does not incorporate a new bridge at 7th Street as shown in the Master Plan.</p> <p>The option would not preclude development of the Whitefish Promenade along Spokane Avenue advocated in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This configuration would require reconstruction of Baker Avenue between 5th and 8th Streets south of the Whitefish River to 13th Street since the existing roadway is only 32 feet to 38 feet wide in this area. Additional right-of-way would be required along Baker Avenue from the Whitefish River crossing to 13th Street.</p> <p>The potential on-street parking loss associated with this option would be similar to other Couplet configurations for the corridor.</p> <p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at two locations. The river would be impacted at the Spokane Avenue crossing due to the need to expand the width of roadway or replace the existing culverts with a new bridge. Additionally, the existing Baker Avenue bridge over the Whitefish River would have to be replaced because the structure is too narrow to accommodate the proposed 3-lane roadway cross-section. Wetland sites and contaminated sediments are also known to exist along the Whitefish River at these highway crossings.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and 3 new signals would be required along Baker Avenue at 5th, 8th and 13th Streets. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, Baker Avenue between 2nd and 13th Streets, and 13th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues. This option would be less costly to construct than options incorporating a new bridge at 7th Street.</p> <p>This configuration was examined in detail in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and a revision to the ROD. Completing a Re-evaluation process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than preparing a Supplemental EIS for the Whitefish Urban project area.</p>

	<p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration relies on a one-way couplet to move traffic through downtown Whitefish. The one-way couplet configurations are not consistent with the traffic circulation concept presented in the Downtown Business District Master Plan. The option also conflicts with the Downtown Business District Master Plan by relying on a 3-lane typical cross-section for 2nd Avenue. Keeping a 2-lane roadway is presented as an essential element of the Master Plan concept.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Alternative C (Offset) Configuration



Alternative C (Offset) is a design option identified in the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. The purpose of this alternative is to split traffic between Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue and maintain two-way traffic flows throughout the corridor. Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, Baker Avenue, and 13th Street would all be configured with three lanes (two lanes in the same direction and one opposing lane). Key elements of this configuration are described below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Spokane Avenue would have two NB lanes and one SB lane.
- On-street parking would be eliminated and a bicycle lane would be added to the street.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided.
- On-street parking would be accommodated on the south side of 2nd Street.
- Appropriate turn lanes would be incorporated at 2nd/Baker.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 13th Street)

- Two SB lanes and one NB lane would be provided.
- A signalized intersection would be provided at 13th Street.
- The geometry would be improved along Baker Avenue with the route being signed as an alternate US 93 route.
- On-street parking would be eliminated and a bike lane would be added to Baker Avenue.

13th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- Two EB lanes and one WB lane would be provided.

Screening Assessment - Alternative C (Offset) Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would increase the capacity of Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish due to the provision of additional travel lanes. Truck accommodation could occur on either Spokane Avenue, or Baker Avenue and 13th Street.</p> <p>The potential exists to divert truck traffic from Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street by designating and signing Baker Avenue and 13th Street as an alternate route for US 93. However, increasing truck traffic on Baker Avenue may be viewed as undesirable by some residents in the area south of the Whitefish River crossing and could impact local traffic movements to side streets in this area.</p> <p>This option performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are seen. From a traffic performance standpoint, this alternative performs at the highest level of any of the corridor configurations analyzed as part of this report.</p> <p>The additional capacity made available on Spokane and Baker Avenues should notably reduce circulating traffic and diverted traffic on parallel and intersecting streets.</p>
Safety	<p>The U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS noted there could be an increase in crash potential due to the non-typical lane configuration (two lanes in one direction and one opposing lane) and possible increases in vehicle travel speeds.</p> <p>Increased traffic on Baker Avenue would impact access and traffic operations at businesses and public buildings along the street. Congestion along Spokane and Baker Avenues would be reduced by the removal of on-street parking maneuvers from through travel lanes.</p> <p>The 3-lane configuration of Spokane and Baker Avenues and 2nd Street would increase pedestrian crossing distances over current conditions.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Design exceptions could be required for turn lane taper rates and any variances from 12-foot-wide lanes.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>

<p>Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals</p>	<p>The provision of a 3-lane roadway on Spokane Avenue north of 7th Street and on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues would conflict with the design configuration for these streets identified in the Downtown Business District Master Plan (which has been adopted as part of the Whitefish City County Growth Policy. Likewise, this configuration extends the 3-lane “contra-flow” circulation on Baker Avenue south of 7th Street to 13th Street and from Baker to Spokane Avenues along 13th Street.</p> <p>This option would provide a for a two-way traffic flow on Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue in downtown Whitefish. Current sentiment among downtown business owners appears to favor two-way traffic flows through the downtown area instead of a one-way couplet.</p> <p>This configuration does not include a new bridge at 7th Street. Some sentiment exists within the community opposing a new bridge at this location due to its effects on the Whitefish River and associated wetlands and riparian habitat.</p> <p>The functional classification of Baker Avenue may need to be changed to a principal arterial if the roadway is designated as an alternate US 93 route.</p>
<p>Environmental Effects</p>	<p>The Offset Configuration would require reconstruction on Baker Avenue south of the Whitefish River to 13th Street since the existing roadway is only 32 feet to 38 feet wide in this area. Additional right-of-way would be required along Baker Avenue from the Whitefish River crossing to 13th Street.</p> <p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at two locations. The river would be impacted at the Spokane Avenue crossing due to the need to expand the width of roadway or replace the existing culverts with a new bridge. Additionally, the existing Baker Avenue bridge over the Whitefish River would have to be replaced because the structure is too narrow to accommodate the proposed 3-lane roadway cross-section. Wetland sites and contaminated sediments are also known to exist along the Whitefish River at these highway crossing.</p> <p>The US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS suggests this configuration would result in the loss of 215 parking spaces within the corridor—more than any other design configuration considered in the FEIS.</p>
<p>Feasibility and Affordability</p>	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and a new signal would be required at Baker and 13th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, Baker Avenue between 2nd and 13th Streets, and 13th Street between Baker</p>

	<p>and Spokane Avenues. This option would be less costly to construct than options incorporating a new bridge at 7th Street.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was examined in detail in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require a Re-evaluation of the FEIS with respect to the Whitefish Urban project area and a revision to the ROD. Completing a Re-evaluation process would be significantly quicker and cheaper than preparing a Supplemental EIS for the Whitefish Urban project area.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration varies from that proposed in the Downtown Business District Master Plan in several notable respects and would result in a substantial loss of on-street parking spaces along Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and along Baker Avenue. Opposition to this configuration could be expected from some members of the downtown business community.</p> <p>The fact that this option does not include a new bridge at 7th Street may help elicit local support for the option.</p>
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Overall Assessment: **ADVANCED for FINAL SCREENING AND DETAILED ANALYSIS**

Modified Record of Decision Configuration



The Modified Record of Decision (ROD) configuration was developed during design work for MDT's Whitefish Urban project and was presented in the Preliminary Traffic Report for the project (WGM Group, Inc. February 2006). The option is a modified version of the ROD Preferred Alternative described earlier. Intersection modifications were made to improve traffic flow and efficiency based on future traffic volumes. Key elements of this option are provided below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking would be provided on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.
- A one-way roadway with two NB lanes would be provided between 7th and 2nd Streets with on-street parking on both sides of the street.
- A bicycle lane would be provided along the east side of the street.
- Double NB left-turn lanes with additional width for trucks would be included at 2nd Street.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided with on-street parking on the south side of the street.
- An EB left-turn lane would be added at Central Avenue.
- Larger corner radii and left turn lanes would also be provided for all directions at Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 7th Street)

- A one-way roadway with two SB lanes would be provided.
- On-street parking would be allowed on the west side of the road with a bicycle lane on the east side of Baker Avenue.
- A SB double left-turn lane would be added at 7th Street.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A new bridge would be constructed to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two EB lanes and one WB lane would be provided with traffic signals at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- Double EB right-turn lanes would be provided at the intersection with Spokane Avenue.
- A new connection would be made along 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues providing EB and WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Modified Record of Decision Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would allow for a slight increase in the capacity of Spokane Avenue, Baker Avenue, and 2nd Street through Whitefish. Truck accommodations for northbound and westbound vehicles on US 93 would be unchanged except for the one-way lane configuration on Spokane Avenue. Southbound trucks would be required to travel south on Baker Avenue, and east across the 7th Street bridge before rejoining Spokane Avenue.</p> <p>This option performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are likely. The 7th Street bridge and 7th Street connection between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues notably improves east-west connectivity.</p> <p>The increase in performance level of this option as compared to the No Action configuration is likely for the same reasons discussed for other one-way couplets. Overall, this configuration could acceptably accommodate the additional traffic expected to occur in the future on the corridor.</p>
Safety	<p>This option represents a notable increase in overall safety on US 93 when compared to existing conditions. The safety concerns associated with this option are similar to the ROD Preferred Alternative Configuration and other one-way couplet options previously discussed.</p> <p>The 2-lane configurations of Baker and Spokane Avenues (north of 7th Street) would keep pedestrian crossing distances similar to existing conditions. However, this option would increase the crossing distance for pedestrians at intersections along 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials.</p> <p>Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Design exceptions could be required for turn lane taper rates and any variances from 12-foot-wide lanes.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This configuration varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan in that it accommodates only southbound travel on Baker Avenues between</p>

	<p>2nd and 7th Streets and provides 3-lanes on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues instead of 2-lanes. The option relies on a one-way couplet using Spokane and Baker Avenues. The one-way couplet concept is not advocated in the Master Plan.</p> <p>This configuration includes a new bridge at 7th Street. Some in the community oppose a new bridge at this location due to its effects on the Whitefish River and associated wetlands and riparian habitat.</p> <p>The configuration would readily accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel along Spokane and Baker Avenues and necessary connections to the City's existing and planned trail system.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations—at the Spokane Avenue crossing, at the existing Baker Avenue bridge, and at a new crossing location at 7th Street. As noted earlier, the new crossing at 7th Street would require a much longer bridge than at other highway crossing locations on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p> <p>WGM's Preliminary Traffic Report (February 2006) estimates the parking loss associated with this configuration at 106 spaces. This is comparable to the parking loss associated with the ROD Preferred Alternative and other one-way couplet configurations.</p> <p>New right-of-way (including a business acquisition) would be needed to accommodate the construction of 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues and the new 7th Street river crossing. Supplemental amounts of right-of-way may be needed at the river crossing on Baker Avenue. Improvements may require supplemental amounts of new right-of-way or full acquisition of businesses at the intersections of Spokane and 7th (SE quadrant) and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue (City Hall in the NE quadrant).</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required on Spokane and Baker Avenues at 7th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets, and 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was developed after the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS/ROD examined in detail in the FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require the preparation of a Supplemental EIS and the issuance of a new ROD for the Whitefish Urban project area. Preparing a Supplemental EIS and new ROD would take longer and be significantly more costly than preparing a Re-evaluation and revised ROD.</p>

	<p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. This configuration relies on a one-way couplet to move traffic through downtown Whitefish. This option, like other couplet configurations, is not consistent with the traffic circulation concept presented in the Downtown Business District Master Plan.</p> <p>Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the CAO and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. Some local opposition to a new bridge at 7th Street may be voiced because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Contra Flow Configuration



The Contra-Flow configuration provides for two-way travel along Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue and has one lane in each direction along 2nd Street. A new bridge across the Whitefish River would be provided at 7th Street to link Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue. Key elements of this option are provided below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.
- Traffic signal at the intersection of Spokane Avenue and 7th Street with NB, SB, and WB turn lanes.
- Two NB lanes and one SB lane between 7th and 2nd Streets.
- On-street parking would be eliminated on both sides of the street between 7th and 2nd Street.
- Pedestrian provisions along both sides of street and a bicycle lane would be provided along the east side of the street.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- One WB lane and one EB lane would be provided with on-street parking where dictated by locations of new turn lanes.
- Left turns would be prohibited onto Central Avenue.
- EB and WB left-turn lanes would be added at Spokane.

- Larger corner radii and left turn lanes would also be provided for all directions at Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 7th Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking.
- A bicycle lane would be added on the right side of Baker Avenue.
- A southbound double left-turn lane would be added at the intersection with 7th Street.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A new bridge would be constructed to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two EB lanes and one WB lane would be provided with signals at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- Double EB right-turn lanes would be provided at the intersection with Spokane Avenue.
- WB right-turn lane would also be included at the intersection with Baker Avenue.
- A new connection would be made along 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues providing EB and WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Contra Flow Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design configuration would allow for an increase in the capacity of Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue through the addition of travel lanes. Without restrictions, trucks could travel in both directions on Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, Baker Avenue, and across a new 7th Street bridge.</p> <p>This configuration performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. As with other options, enhanced east-west connectivity; decreases in travel times, delays and number of stops, and increases in intersection LOS and overall performance could be realized with this option.</p> <p>This alternative increases the performance level of the corridor while still allowing for two-way travel along Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue. Overall, this option would adequately accommodate the traffic increases expected to occur in the future.</p>
Safety	<p>This option represents a notable increase in overall safety on US 93 when compared to existing conditions. However, increased left turn conflicts would be expected since southbound traffic on Spokane Avenue and northbound traffic on Baker Avenue would be required to cross two opposing lanes.</p> <p>Crossing distances for pedestrians would be increased over existing conditions on both Spokane and Baker Avenues and at the Spokane Avenue/2nd Street and 2nd Street/Baker Avenue intersections where turn lanes would be added.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Design exceptions could be required for turn lane taper rates and any variances from 12-foot-wide lanes.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This option varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan in that it incorporates a 3-lane contra-flow concept on Spokane Avenue as well as Baker Avenue. The Master Plan recommends a contra-flow traffic movement pattern only on Baker Avenue. Other elements of this configuration are consistent with the Master Plan.</p> <p>The Contra-Flow configuration would maintain two-way traffic flows and accessibility to downtown businesses. This is generally consistent</p>

	<p>with the transportation concept presented in the Master Plan and the desires of many in the downtown business community.</p> <p>This configuration includes a new bridge at 7th Street. Some in the community oppose a new bridge at this location due to its effects on the Whitefish River and associated wetlands and riparian habitat.</p> <p>The configuration would readily accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel along Spokane and Baker Avenues and needed connections to the City's existing and planned trail system.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations—at the Spokane Avenue crossing, at the existing Baker Avenue bridge, and at a new crossing location at 7th Street. As noted earlier, the new crossing at 7th Street would require a much longer bridge than at other highway crossing locations on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p> <p>WGM's Preliminary Traffic Report (February 2006) estimates the on-street parking loss associated with this configuration at 198 spaces. This is substantially greater than the parking loss associated with the ROD Preferred Alternative, other one-way couplet configurations, and the Modified ROD Configuration.</p> <p>New right-of-way (including a business acquisition) would be needed to accommodate the construction of 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues and the new 7th Street river crossing. Supplemental amounts of right-of-way may be needed at all river crossings.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required on Spokane and Baker Avenues at 7th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets, and 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was developed after the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS/ROD examined in detail in the FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require the preparation of a Supplemental EIS and the issuance of a new ROD for the Whitefish Urban project area. Preparing a Supplemental EIS and new ROD would take longer and be significantly more costly than preparing a Re-evaluation and revised ROD.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the CAO and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. Some local opposition to a</p>

	<p>new bridge at 7th Street may be voiced because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p> <p>The accommodation of two-way traffic flows on Spokane and Baker Avenues north of 7th Street appears to have the support of downtown business owners.</p>
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Overall Assessment: ADVANCED for FINAL SCREENING AND DETAILED ANALYSIS

Truck Route Configuration



The Truck Route configuration was also developed during design work for MDT's Whitefish Urban project and was presented in the Preliminary Traffic Report for the project (WGM Group, Inc. February 2006). This option is intended to remove truck traffic from the downtown area and provide two way traffic flows through the corridor. Key elements of this option are provided below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.
- Traffic signal at the intersection of Spokane Avenue and 7th Street would be provided along with appropriate turn lanes.
- One NB lane and one SB lane between 7th and 2nd Streets would be provided with on-street parking along both sides of the street.
- Pedestrian provisions along both sides of street and a bicycle lane would be provided along the east side of the street.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- One WB and one EB lane would be provided at this location with on-street parking along both sides of the street.
- Left turns would be prohibited at the intersection with Central Avenue.

- Eastbound and westbound left-turn lanes would be added at the intersection with Spokane Avenue.
- Larger corner radii and left turn lanes would also be added in all directions at the intersection with Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 7th Street)

- Two NB lanes and one SB lane would be provided.
- No on-street parking would be accommodated along Baker Avenue; however, a bicycle lane would be provided on the east side of Baker Avenue.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A new bridge would be constructed to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two WB lanes and one EB lane would be provided and signals would be installed at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- Double WB right-turn lanes would be provided at the intersection with Baker Avenue.
- A new connection would be made along 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues providing EB and WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Truck Route Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design option would increase the capacity of Baker Avenue between 2nd Street and 7th Street as well as Spokane Avenue from 7th Street to 13th Street due to the additional travel lanes. The intent of this alternative is to remove trucks from downtown Whitefish by providing an additional northbound travel lane along Baker Avenue as well as adding a 7th Street bridge with two westbound lanes.</p> <p>The Truck Route Configuration performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay, and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are likely seen under this alternative.</p> <p>The performance level increase associated with this configuration can be attributed to the additional northbound lane along Baker Avenue, the addition of the 7th Street bridge, and the provision of turn-lanes along 2nd Street. The 7th Street bridge and 7th Street connection between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues notably improves east-west connectivity. Overall, this alternative could acceptably accommodate the additional traffic expected to occur in the future.</p>
Safety	<p>This option represents a notable increase in overall safety on US 93 when compared to existing conditions. However, increased left turn conflicts would be expected since southbound traffic on Baker Avenue would be required to cross two opposing lanes.</p> <p>Crossing distances for pedestrians would be increased over existing conditions on Baker Avenue and at the Spokane Avenue/2nd Street and 2nd Street/Baker Avenue intersections where turn lanes would be added.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally comply with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Design exceptions could be required for turn lane taper rates and any variances from 12-foot-wide lanes.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>
Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals	<p>This option varies from the recommendations shown in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan in the following ways: 1) Spokane Avenue north of 7th Street remains a 2-lane street serving north and southbound travel; 2) a 3-lane contra-flow concept is used on Baker Avenue but two northbound lanes are provided instead of two southbound lanes; and 3) the 3-lane configuration on 7th Street</p>

	<p>uses two westbound lanes instead of two eastbound lanes. Other elements of this configuration are consistent with the Master Plan. Parking would be retained on 2nd Street and Spokane Avenue north of 7th Street consistent with the Downtown Business District Master Plan. Additionally, this configuration would maintain two-way traffic flows and accessibility to downtown businesses. This is generally consistent with the transportation concept presented in the Master Plan.</p> <p>This configuration includes a new bridge at 7th Street. Some in the community oppose a new bridge at this location due to its effects on the Whitefish River and associated wetlands and riparian habitat.</p>
Environmental Effects	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations—at the Spokane Avenue crossing, at the existing Baker Avenue bridge, and at a new crossing location at 7th Street. As noted earlier, the new crossing at 7th Street would require a much longer bridge than at other highway crossing locations on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p> <p>WGM’s Preliminary Traffic Report (February 2006) estimates the on-street parking loss associated with this configuration at 56 spaces. This represents one of the options with the least impacts to on-street parking.</p> <p>Noise levels along Baker Avenue would rise as truck volumes on the roadway increase. However, noise levels may decrease along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street due to the removal of trucks from the traffic flow.</p> <p>New right-of-way (including a business acquisition) would be needed to accommodate the construction of 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues and the new 7th Street river crossing. Supplemental amounts of right-of-way may be needed at all river crossings.</p>
Feasibility and Affordability	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required on Spokane and Baker Avenues at 7th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets, and 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was developed after the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS/ROD examined in detail in the FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require the preparation of a Supplemental EIS and the issuance of a new ROD for the Whitefish Urban project area. Preparing a Supplemental EIS and new ROD would take longer and be</p>

	<p>significantly more costly than preparing a Re-evaluation and revised ROD.</p> <p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy. Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the CAO and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. Some local opposition to a new bridge at 7th Street may be voiced because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p> <p>The accommodation of two-way traffic flows on Spokane and Baker Avenues north of 7th Street appears to be consistent with local desires.</p>
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Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

Downtown Business District Master Plan Configuration



This configuration originates from the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan completed during 2005 and adopted by the City as part of the Whitefish City-County Growth Policy. The intent of this option is to improve automobile and truck circulation through the downtown while accommodating downtown redevelopment and streetscape enhancements along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street and on Central Avenue. Key elements of this option are provided below:

SPOKANE AVENUE (13th Street to 2nd Street)

- Two NB lanes and two SB lanes with no on-street parking on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets.
- Replacement of culverts at Whitefish River with a bridge.
- Traffic signal at the intersection of Spokane Avenue and 7th Street with NB, SB, and WB turn lanes.
- Between 7th and 2nd Street, Spokane Avenue would be a one-way roadway with two NB lanes.
- On-street parking would be allowed on one side of the street with a two-way bicycle lane being added to the other side along Spokane north of 7th.
- The Whitefish Promenade and other associated pedestrian provisions would be developed along Spokane north of 7th.

2nd STREET (Spokane Avenue – Baker Avenue)

- One WB lane and one EB lane would be provided with on-street parking where dictated by the locations of new turn lanes.
- Left turns would be prohibited onto Central Avenue.
- Curb extensions would be used at the intersection with Central Avenue to reduce pedestrian crossing distance and streetscape enhancements would be provided.
- Larger corner radii and left turn lanes would also be provided for all directions at Baker Avenue.

BAKER AVENUE (2nd Street – 7th Street)

- Two SB lanes and one NB lanes with on-street parking on one side of the street.
- A SB double left-turn lane would be added at the intersection with 7th Street.

7th STREET (Baker Avenue – Spokane Avenue)

- A new bridge would be constructed to connect Baker and Spokane Avenues.
- Two EB lanes and one WB lane would be provided with signals at the intersections with Baker Avenue and Spokane Avenue.
- A new connection would be made along 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues providing EB and WB lanes.

Screening Assessment - Business District Master Plan Configuration

CONSIDERATION	COMMENTS
Capacity and Traffic Operations	<p>This design would allow for a slight increase in capacity along Spokane Avenue and Baker Avenue. Truck accommodation would change in that northbound and westbound trucks would be required to travel north on Spokane Avenue and southbound and eastbound trucks would have to travel south on Baker Avenue and then east across the 7th Street bridge.</p> <p>This option performs better than the No Action configuration under both existing and future conditions. Decreases in travel times, delay and number of stops along with increases in intersection LOS and overall performance are likely for the same reasons as with other options. The 7th Street bridge and 7th Street connection between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues notably improves east-west connectivity.</p> <p>Part of the increase in performance level of this option compared to the No Action conditions can be attributed to the fact that there are fewer left-turns from the side streets that need to cross more than one lane of traffic on Spokane Avenue north of 7th. One-way traffic eliminates these movements that often result in increased delay and travel time.</p>
Safety	<p>This option represents a notable increase in overall safety on US 93 when compared to existing conditions. The one-way configuration on Spokane Avenue north of 7th would eliminate left turn conflicts for northbound motorists. However, increased left turn conflicts would be expected since northbound traffic on Baker Avenue would be required to cross two opposing southbound lanes.</p> <p>Pedestrian crossing distances on Spokane Avenue north of 7th and on 2nd Street would be similar to existing conditions. However, crossing distances for pedestrians would be increased over existing conditions on Baker Avenue and at the Spokane Avenue/2nd Street and 2nd Street/Baker Avenue intersections where turn lanes would be added.</p>
Eliminate/Reduce Roadway Deficiencies	<p>It is expected that the new roadway would be designed in a manner that resolves geometric deficiencies within the corridor and generally complies with MDT's design guidance for urban principal arterials. Increased corner radii would be provided as needed at Spokane and 2nd Street and at 2nd Street and Baker Avenue. Design exceptions could be required for turn lane taper rates and any variances from 12-foot-wide lanes.</p> <p>Widening would be needed on Baker Avenue (including the existing bridge over the Whitefish River) to accommodate the proposed road cross-section.</p>

<p>Compatibility With Local Plans and Community Ideals</p>	<p>This configuration was recommended in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan and would be fully consistent with local desires for the downtown area and for the preservation and enhancement of local character.</p> <p>The configuration would readily accommodate pedestrian and bicycle travel along Spokane and Baker Avenues and needed connections to the City's existing and planned trail system.</p>
<p>Environmental Effects</p>	<p>This option would affect the Whitefish River at three locations—at the Spokane Avenue crossing, at the existing Baker Avenue bridge, and at a new crossing location at 7th Street. As noted earlier, the new crossing at 7th Street would require a much longer bridge than at other highway crossing locations on Spokane and Baker Avenues.</p> <p>This configuration would result in on-street parking losses but would retain parking along portions of Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue. However, the loss in on-street parking would be less than that associated with the ROD Preferred Alternative, other one-way couplet configurations, and other configurations proposed after the FEIS.</p> <p>Noise levels along Baker Avenue would rise as overall traffic and truck volumes on the roadway increase. Conversely, noise levels may decrease somewhat along Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street due to the removal of trucks from the traffic flow.</p> <p>New right-of-way (including a business acquisition) would be needed to accommodate the construction of 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues and the new 7th Street river crossing. Supplemental amounts of right-of-way may be needed at all river crossings.</p>
<p>Feasibility and Affordability</p>	<p>Overall Cost and Affordability. This option includes the replacement of two existing bridges and the construction of a new bridge across the Whitefish River. Signal upgrades or replacements would be needed at 4 locations and new signals would be required on Spokane and Baker Avenues at 7th Street. This option would require reconstruction on Spokane Avenue and 2nd Street, Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets, and 7th Street between Spokane and Kalispell Avenues. This option would be among those with the highest overall cost.</p> <p>Future NEPA/MEPA Compliance. This configuration was developed after the US Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS/ROD examined in detail in the FEIS. Advancing this configuration would require the preparation of a Supplemental EIS and the issuance of a new ROD for the Whitefish Urban project area. Preparing a Supplemental EIS and new ROD would take longer and be significantly more costly than preparing a Re-evaluation and revised ROD.</p>

	<p>Potential for Agency/Public Opposition or Controversy.</p> <p>Building a new bridge at 7th Street and reconstructing existing highway bridges will be subject to the CAO and other federal and state regulations protecting water quality. Some local opposition to a new bridge at 7th Street may be voiced because the crossing would be located at the widest point on Whitefish River.</p> <p>Based on public input during the development of the Downtown Business District Master Plan and the City's Growth Policy, this configuration would appear to have significant support within the community.</p>
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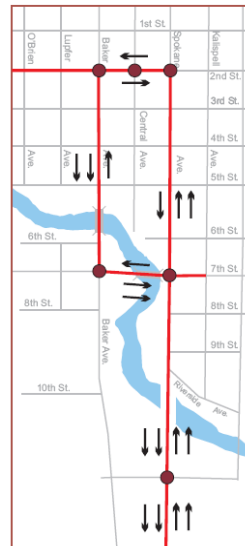
Overall Assessment: NOT ADVANCED TO FINAL SCREENING

CONFIGURATIONS RECOMMENDED FOR FURTHER DETAILED EVALUATION

Based on the results of the operational review and first-level screening of the options advanced from the pre-screening stage, two design configurations—Alternative C (Offset) and the Contra-Flow Configuration—are recommended for detailed reviews in the corridor study. Schematics of these configurations are shown below.



Alternative C (Offset) Configuration



Contra-Flow Configuration

The recommended design options include an alternative evaluated in detail in the U.S. Highway 93 Somers to Whitefish FEIS and a more recent design configuration that reflects many transportation network improvements identified in the Whitefish Downtown Business District Master Plan.

The operational review suggests these two configurations would have the best Performance Index (PI) ratings in the year 2030 of all the design configurations under consideration. The Performance Index is a quantitative measure of overall network performance based on vehicle stops and delays as calculated by the *Synchro* software. These design configurations showed the most favorable (lowest PI) ratings among alternatives for like total delay and fewest unserved vehicles on the network. According to the operational review, the Contra-Flow configuration performed the best of all configurations in terms of total delays per vehicle and average speed for vehicles traveling the street network. The Alternative C (Offset) and the Contra-Flow Configurations consistently had measures of effectiveness ratings similar or better than most other design configurations evaluated. The recommended design configurations performed better than the ROD Preferred Alternative and the Downtown Business District Master Plan Configurations.

The Alternative C (Offset) and the Contra-Flow Configurations provide for two-way traffic flows on Spokane Avenue, 2nd Street, and Baker Avenue. Input from the business community and public during the development of the Downtown Business District Master Plan and the City's Growth Policy suggests this type of traffic flow reflects local desires and is essential to the long-term economic viability of downtown Whitefish.

The Alternative C (Offset) configuration varies notably from the ROD Preferred Alternative because it does not rely on a one-way couplet for circulation through downtown Whitefish. Other significant differences between these configurations include: the provision of a 3-lane contra-flow configuration on Spokane and Baker Avenues between 2nd and 13th Streets; the lack of a new bridge at 7th Street; and the use of Baker Avenue south of 7th Street and a portion of 13th Street to accommodate corridor traffic.

It could be argued that the Downtown Master Plan Configuration should be advanced for final evaluation in the corridor study since the Master Plan and its recommendations have been adopted by the City and made part of the City's Growth Policy. However, the Contra-Flow Configuration has several similarities to the Downtown Master Plan Configuration including: a 3-lane contra-flow lane configuration on Baker Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets; a 2-lane configuration on 2nd Street between Spokane and Baker Avenues; and the provision of a new bridge 7th Street bridge with one westbound and two eastbound lanes. The most notable difference between the Contra-Flow and Downtown Business District Master Plan Configurations is the recommended lane configuration and accommodation of on-street parking along Spokane Avenue between 2nd and 7th Streets. The Contra-Flow configuration uses two northbound and one southbound lane in this segment of the corridor and the Master Plan Configuration provides only two northbound lanes.

Conducting detailed evaluations of the Alternative C (Offset) and the Contra-Flow Configurations in the corridor study will help answer the following questions:

- Will a 3-lane roadway on Spokane Avenue between 13th and 7th Streets be effective in accommodating traffic or are 4-lanes necessary?
- How significant are the operational benefits of a new bridge at 7th Street and do the operational benefits and costs of such a bridge outweigh its potential environmental effects?
- What are the tradeoffs with providing a 3-lane roadway on Spokane Avenue between 7th and 2nd Streets instead of a one-way street as called for in the Downtown Business District Master Plan Configuration?
- Does 2nd Street need 3-lanes to operate efficiently and effectively?
- Are there notable benefits to incorporating Baker Avenue between 7th and 13th Streets and 13th Street between Baker and Spokane Avenues to accommodate corridor traffic?

Addressing these questions in the corridor study, should help identify an effective long-term solution for the US 93 corridor in Whitefish.

The consideration of these design options also provides an opportunity to explore two procedural options to MDT and FHWA for demonstrating compliance with NEPA and MEPA provisions and advancing a project(s) toward implementation. If the Alternative C (Offset) Configuration is ultimately selected for the US 93 corridor through Whitefish, it may be possible for MDT/FHWA to prepare a Re-evaluation of the FEIS specifically for the Whitefish Urban project area and revise the original ROD. FHWA's regulations addressing such a situation, listed in 23 CFR 771.127(b), are shown below:

“If the Administration subsequently wishes to approve an alternative which was not identified as the preferred alternative but was fully evaluated in the final EIS, or proposes to make substantial changes to the mitigation measures or findings discussed in the ROD, a revised ROD shall be subject to review by those Administration offices which reviewed the final EIS under Sec. 771.125(c). To the extent practicable the approved revised ROD shall be provided to all persons, organizations, and agencies that received a copy of the final EIS pursuant to Sec. 771.125(g).”

If the Contra-Flow Configuration (or some other option not evaluated in detail in the FEIS) were selected, MDT and FHWA would be obligated to prepare a Supplemental EIS and seek a new ROD to advance corridor improvements. A Supplemental EIS would likely be significantly more costly and time consuming than to prepare than a Re-evaluation of the FEIS and revised the ROD.